

After a long winter, spring has sprung with summer on the way! The snow has melted and the weather is beautiful – and it's the perfect time to see a movie! The summer movie season is my personal favorite because gone from the theater are the Oscar nominated flicks beloved by the critics and the artsy folks. Do I want a film of people talking to each other doing nothing? Nay! I want a blow-em-up, rock 'em, sock 'em, testosterone powered film that costs almost as much as the New York Yankees' payroll.

Summer movies always have great potential, but more often than not (at least last year); Hollywood found ways to screw it up. The 2002 summer is loaded with high priced sequels and returning favorites with no potential Battlefield: Earths on the horizon. Let's delve deeper into this year's field:

**Spider-Man** (Opening May 3) – Tobey Maguire stars as the title character along with Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane and Willem Dafoe as the Green Goblin in this long-awaited film based on the comic book character. Now, I'm not a big Spidey fan myself, but I must admit that I have a soft spot in my heart for all superhero movies. There is one thing about this otherwise promising film that bothers me and that is director Sam Raimi. For those of you unaware of Raimi's filmography, it consists mostly of the super-campy Evil Dead series. The success of Spider-Man is dependent on how Raimi approaches this film. It has the potential to be over the top, cheesy and campy (think: Batman & Robin). However, I choose to be optimistic and am looking forward to this film. How can it go wrong with Randy "Macho Man" Savage in the cast?

**Prediction:** 3 stars (out of 4)

**Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones** (May 16) – Now comes the mother of all films to come out this summer. Naturally, if you only see one film this year, it should be Episode II. From viewing the trailers, it appears that new Anakin Hayden Christensen is about as good an actor as his predecessor in the role in Episode I (that's a bad thing. They didn't call him Mannequin Skywalker for nothing). And if the Star Wars franchise is built on one thing, it is acting and storyline, right? (That's sarcasm). Early reports are saying that Jar Jar Binks has a very limited role and will be in the film all of 2 minutes. This is clearly the key and the reason why I think this will be superior to The Phantom Menace. I've been geeking out over the trailers for months . . . I WANT TO SEE THIS MOVIE NOW!!

**Prediction:** 4 stars

**Stallion: Spirit of the Cimarron** (May 24) – This film may just be the stupidest idea I have ever seen in my entire life. It's animated and it's about a talking horse. I can't wait for its release just to see it crushed by the tidal wave of revenue that will be Episode II. In the meantime, I'll stick with Mr. Ed reruns.

**Prediction:** 0 stars

**Insomnia** (May 24) – While some of you will be suffering through Stallion: Spirit of the Cimarron on May 24, I will be seeing Insomnia (or watching Episode II for the fifth time). This film stars Al Pacino, Hilary Swank, and Robin Williams. From the director of Memento comes this psychological thriller that has very little chance of being bad.

**Prediction:** 3 stars

**The Sum of All Fears** (May 31) – Adapted from Tom Clancy’s novel, this film stars Ben Affleck in the role of Jack Ryan (previously played by Alec Baldwin and Harrison Ford). Does little Benny have what it takes to fill in those shoes? Frankly, no. Affleck would have problems filling the shoes of Carrot Top in the 1-800-CALL-ATT commercials (OK, so I’m still a little bitter about Pearl Harbor). As previously stated, however, acting has little to do with the success of a summer blockbuster. Affleck will do what he always does and that will be adequate for this film which is bound to hit some nerves with it’s subject matter of terrorists nuking the Super Bowl. But it’s OK because instead of having Arab terrorists like in the book, for politically correct reasons it’s been changed to European neo-Nazi terrorists. Thank goodness Hollywood feels free to do things like this; now I can completely forget about 9/11! (Again - sarcasm).

**Prediction:** 3 stars

**Bad Company** (June 7) – I never thought I’d be saying this about a Joel Schumacher film, but from the director of Batman & Robin comes a pretty promising little flick! Chris Rock stars as a man recruited to the CIA by Anthony Hopkins. If the trailer is any indication, this film will be chock full of action and laughs. Never underestimate the evil that Schumacher is capable of, however.

**Prediction:** 3 stars.

**Windtalkers** (June 14) - Luckily for Hollywood, about five war movies were in the works even before the War on Terrorism began. Windtalkers is one such film directed by John Woo and starring Nicolas Cage as a marine assigned to protect a Navajo soldier who is a coder for the military. Woo’s American movies have been below the standard of his foreign films, but Windtalkers has the advantage of being in one of my favorite genres. I love war movies and John Woo has the opportunity of living up the standards he set for himself in Face/Off.

**Prediction:** 3 ½ stars.

**Scooby-Doo** (June 14) – You may foolishly go to see Scooby-Doo on June 14<sup>th</sup> instead of Windtalkers, but don’t say I didn’t warn you. This rat carcass of a film stars Freddy Prinze, Jr. as Fred, Sarah Michelle Gellar as Velma, and Matthew Lillard (known to me as the tongue guy from Scream) as Shaggy. Scooby is CGI, but I wouldn’t see this film even for a Scooby-snack. (A little critic talk for you).

**Prediction:** 1 ½ stars.

**Mr. Deeds** (June 21) – Mr. Deeds is the latest offering of Adam Sandler. Sadly, Mr. Sandler’s films have dropped off a bit since The Waterboy, and his best films remain Billy Madison and Happy Gilmore. What I’ve seen so far of the film seems fairly funny, but I have a feeling that this movie will go more the way of Big Daddy than anything.

**Prediction:** 2 ½ stars.

**Minority Report** (June 28) – Steven Spielberg directs and Tom Cruise stars in this futuristic film about a society where criminals are arrested before the crime is even

committed. While the look of this film is a lot like last year's A.I., I'm hoping the actual content is vastly different and (hopefully) more entertaining. Best of all, Haley Joel Osment is nowhere to be seen, so this film will be worth a shot. I'm hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. This film has an enormous amount of potential, but then again so did A.I.

**Prediction:** 3 stars.

**The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course** (June 28) – It's gonna be a close call on whether I see Minority Report or The Crocodile Hunter on June 28. I think Steve Irwin is hilarious because, let's face it, he is a lunatic. My personal favorite quote of his is this after he was shot in the face with snake venom: "I don't know which is deadlier, the venom, or the water I'm washing my face off with!" This may not be a great movie, but it will be fun. Crikey!

**Prediction:** 2 ½ stars.

**Men In Back 2** (July 3) – Does this franchise really have enough steam in it for another movie? My person feeling is that this will go the way of Rush Hour in that the sequel will be good, but it won't up the ante like sequels should. I just don't see this being any better (or worse) than the original.

**Prediction:** 3 stars.

**Eight Legged Freaks** (July 12) – Well, this one is gonna be interesting. David Arquette stars (WAIT! Don't leave yet!) in this film about giant, mutated spiders. Like the Crocodile Hunter, this film will be good, but in a Saturday afternoon Godzilla movie kind of good. (That is, more "fun" than "good").

**Prediction:** 2 stars.

**Gangs of New York** (July 12) – This may be the first (and only) Leonardo DiCaprio film I have seen since Titanic. Apparently the former-star found some time in between partying and contracting STDs to film this Martin Scorsese flick set in the turn of the century New York.

**Prediction:** 2 ½ stars.

**Halloween: Resurrection** (July 19) – WHY?! MAKE IT STOP!! Michael Myers had his *head chopped off* in Halloween H20, *how can he come back?!* Well, apparently it wasn't the "real" Michael that got killed in H20. Ugh. While I know I'm gonna end up seeing this, I will ask for everyone else to boycott the film in the desperate hope that they will stop making Halloween movies. Resurrection will make seven of them in a row that sucked. See, these are the kinds of movies that come out around my birthday every year. I never get a good one. (My B-Day is the 20<sup>th</sup> if you care to send a present to make me feel better).

**Prediction:** ½ star.

**Austin Powers 3** (July 26) – Unfortunately, the name Goldmember has already been discontinued because of legal issues with owners of the James Bond franchise (unlike

The Spy Who Shagged Me, right?). I really hope this film will surprise me because AP2 did. I think that is one of the few sequels that were better than the original. We will see.

**Prediction:** 2 ½ stars.

**Signs** (August 2) – Mel Gibson, The Emperor from Gladiator, and Macaulay Culkin’s brother star in the latest from M. Night Shyamalan, the director of The Sixth Sense. I am one of three people globally that did not like The Sixth Sense and I never saw Unbreakable because my sources said that it sucked. I love the vast majority of Mel Gibson movies, but I’m wary of this one.

**Prediction:** 2 stars.

**XXX** (August 2) – No, this isn’t a porno flick, it’s Vin Diesel’s latest film. This film not only has Diesel going for it, it also has the director of The Fast and the Furious. How could this go wrong? Probably very easily, but I will just say that Vin Diesel has yet to make a bad movie (that I have seen) and I loved The Fast and the Furious. It will be over the top, but secret agent movies are supposed to be like that. The one bad omen is that the final highlight of the summer movie season is usually a big let down (this classifies as the climax of the summer unless you’re planning on seeing Spy Kids 2).

**Prediction:** 3 stars.